

1989

Spectrum, 1989

Spectrum Contributors
Northwestern College, Iowa

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SPECTRUM

Northwestern College
May 1989

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Photographic Memories

Larry A. Baker

Slides in a carousel,
Constant rotation.

Side by side

Our feet dangle in cool stream water.
A big man shadows the small duplicate.

Grandfather surrounded by grandchildren,
Faces drenched from laughter.

Grandfather like a moviehouse,
His stories--narrated films.
So vivid I smell the sweat of the horses.
So vivid I feel the buggy snap in two.

A numbing knot--we round the corner.
Grandfather's house appears.
I lean,
Half expecting to see his shadow.

Click,
--Cool water
--Sweat-covered horses
--Laughter.
Whirring images.

Diver

Valerie Van Horssen

A skillet,
the pool.
A kernel,
the diver,
quivers with excitement.
Immobile—concentrated.
When ready,
one dares to dive.
Below water
the pressure increases.
He surfaces,
gasping for air.
The kernel
too feels the pressure,
as if it were to burst,
suddenly exploding
into popcorn.

WINDIGO

Sheri Harthoorn

Thunder Cloud

This is a beauty
of dissonance
this resonance
of stony strand
this smoky cry
curled over a black pine
like a broken
and wind-battered branch
when the wind
bends the tops of the pines
and curdles the sky
from the north.
This is the beauty
of strength
broken by strength
and still strong.

--A.J.M. Smith
from "The Lonely Land"

It is midnight. The sunset is reflecting in the east while the large moon sits on the waters as if it were the setting sun. The northern lights partially light my way home. I begin walking past the hospital, Sam's Confectionery, and the Northern Hotel. Even before I turn the corner, I know that the man lies on the ground or is propped

against the chipped blue garbage can in drunken stupor. Several steps from him, a young girl sleeps.

It has been two weeks since I started working at the youth center uptown, and every night when I walk home I see him lying there. Sometimes he cradles a bottle of wine in his arm and sometimes a bottle of Listerine, depending on how much money the girl made collecting bottles and cans. Tonight I stand and stare and wonder. What is he dreaming of--be it ever so unconsciously? Does he dream of his old powers restored? Of casting hexes? Of cures? Whatever he is dreaming, I'm sure that it's better than nothing.

His name is Thunder Cloud and he is part of the legend of this place, the living archives of a world that has ceased remembering and believing. His nose dominates his face with wart pregnant upon wart until all other features are subjected to that one. He is old, perhaps 70. His white filmy hair fractures the light from the street into spectral colors upon his face.

He alarms me, and I quit my spying. Although I leave the body there, he does not leave me but possesses my thoughts all the way to my apartment and as I try to sleep. I can not shut out the gnomish man.

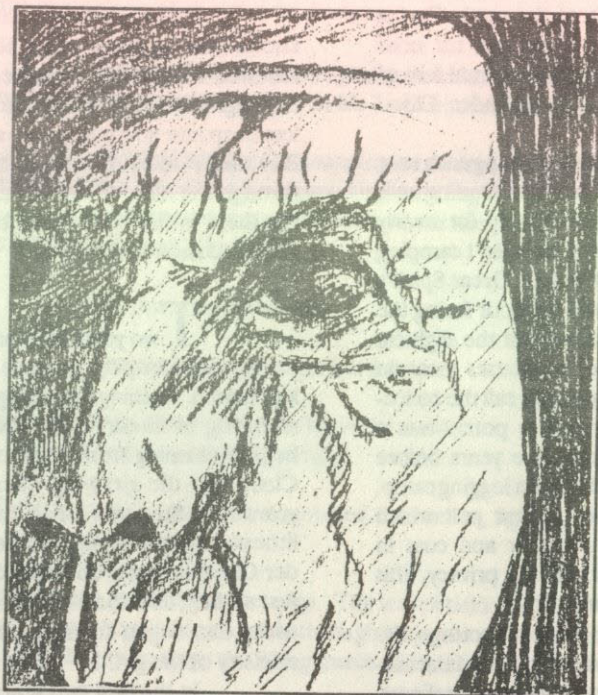
Thunder Cloud is the last medicine man in the area. I've heard that when he was "practic-

ing," men would buy him drinks and move to give him the best seats. Children feared him and cowered away. They still run away, but now they run from ugliness and in laughter, with fingers pointed at him. "Look at the old fool!" they say.

No one knows where the girl came from. Her name is Step-and-a-half because she limps--a disorder from interbreeding, fairly common in this area. Some say that she is mentally retarded, others just wonder why a young girl cares about the old man. She is deaf and dumb but that doesn't seem to matter much because the communion they share isn't one where words are necessary.

Before coming here I read a plethora of books about Native Americans and their ancient legends and myths. No one, of course, is more curious than a medicine man who cures with roots, rocks, and rituals. It seemed divinely ironic that I should now meet one who has not met me--or perhaps he has.

Back in my apartment room, I rummage through notes and books I've read about medicine men. The illustrations and the Native poetry draw me into the world of Thunder Cloud, and I can imagine, almost remember, his days of glory...



I do not think he had warts then, and his eyes--deep brown--were more prominent. Medicine men are visionaries, people of dreams and powers, and it seems only fitting that his eyes were especially striking. He carried a beaded

moose-hide bag with him nearly everywhere. It contained pieces of cloth, tinfoil, handkerchiefs, seeds, roots, red ocher, and tobacco.

Last night, Thunder Cloud saw the spirit of the bird when he was hunting moose. She appeared as a nymph-like woman, airy and bathed in light. Her long hair fluttered like down feathers in the wind. In a gentle, melodic, voice she told Thunder Cloud where to find roots, rocks, and mushroom spores for

healings of many kinds. Then, while he was watching, she transfigured into a bird and flew into a tree. Thunder Cloud tied a soft piece of velvet to the tree limb in gratitude for the spirit's kindness and returned to his cottage.

Early the next morning he woke to collect the roots that the bird spirit told him about. Before he went, he prayed this prayer which all medicine men pray: "O God, whose goodness,

more than the power You have given these medicines, gives us hope of cure; may the power of these plants bring us healing in Your name." He collected red rock for heart diseases at the place where the river bends and fat root at the forest's edge. Kneeling beside the tiny plant, his enormous body focused on one point, he grasped the plant with his thumb and index finger and coaxed the plant one way and leaned it the other until the root freed itself from the earth. On his way home, he collected mushrooms for nose bleeds, rat root for colds, and the normal fare of roots, rocks and potions that Thunder Cloud keeps on hand.

Upon arriving home, he hung each root from the ceiling beams and from protruding nails on the wall. He lived in the shanty for nearly twenty years off and on, when he wasn't camping under the stars or roving through Great Spirit's land. He built the shanty with the door facing the rising sun and the roof slanting just the slightest bit downward. In the winter he freezes meat on the roof. On the porch—if you can call the collection of boards nailed together a porch—was a rocking chair that he bought five years before from money he earned working at a logging camp. Draped over the chair was a bear pelt which served as blanket in the summer and coat in winter. Thunder Cloud loved his privacy, this place of wooded recluse, and yet . . .

From the beams inside his cottage, the menagerie of drying roots nearly covered the ceiling, calling him back again and again to loneliness. No one came to ask for healing any more—even his own people were taking medicine from bottles instead of what the Great Spirit provides. The sounds of nature were growing fainter by degrees. Soon Thunder Cloud would no longer be able to hear when the spirit of the bird beckoned him.

There is another, more primal aspect to this fear—that the fading sounds of nature should be followed by sleep without vision. Visions are crucial. Through them, powers are given, and the

absence of them is the worst sort of death: becoming a Windigo. The idea embodied his most profound fears. Windigos are supernatural cannibals with hearts of ice that inhabit people whose vision has fled. They wander through the hills and valleys endlessly pining over their lost soul. Their heart beat can be heard for miles, reverberating like a single plaintive drum beat from a war dance that continues decades after the dancers go home.

I don't believe that Thunder Cloud knows how he came to La Ronge. Perhaps he followed a bird that twittered just beyond his hearing. Perhaps he never awoke from a dreamless sleep and now houses the spirit of a Windigo. But unlike most Windigos, he doesn't wander through the hills, or even through the town, but lies there in his alcohol-numbed bed of broken glass and shattered dreams.

Two years have passed, and I return to my old stomping grounds in Northern Saskatchewan. Nothing has changed except the slow maturing of hundred-year-old odors and aging hops. Returning from downtown I see Thunder Cloud and the girl lying where I left them two years ago. Step-and-a-half has matured into a lithe young woman with sensual black hair. Thunder Cloud is nearly unchanged, but has softened just slightly, as if the block of ice within his chest cavity has begun to melt under the consoling ministry of the girl.

In the past two years I have concluded that Thunder Cloud was a Windigo, but now he hardly seems a supernatural cannibal. I stand gazing at the pitiful face that contains such terror. As I look, one eye, nearly hidden by his nose, opens and winks at me. I hear a scream from inside me, then the reverberating sound of a Windigo's footsteps deafens me from within, dominating my inner ear as I walk all the way home. ▣

The Lamenting Spirit of a Tree Frog

Holly Donaghy

The willow trees bend down to kiss the murky green surface.

Ducks swim slowly, herding their broods like amoebas, the protoplasm alive and ever-changing.

Alone, I sit in my perch, gazing down at the water below and wondering what intricacies of life I will witness today.

Will the carnivorous snapping turtle rear up and wrench a leg off of an unsuspecting duckling?

Will the muskrat creep out from his home underneath the soggy, muddy green bank? I will wait,

For this is my home.

The day has gone, night has fallen.

I am witness to the green glass that is the water, and the blackness that is the night.

The stars and the moon have revealed themselves, lighting up my world, my home.

Quietly I sit, perched on the edge. The leaves tickle my feet, my face as the wind spins softly through the trees. Somewhere, a locust begins to sing; the lilting music delicately

overwhelms my ears.

My voice begins--"Whirrreee-Whireee-Whirrrr."

And I become one--
with the nighttime whispers through the

slender branches,

The songs echoing--
and the wind carolling the tune of the moon.

HOW IT'S BEEN DOWN AT THE STORE

Holly Donaghy

"I want three tickets, straight/box, one dollar." I scrambled for the right keys, trying not to print the wrong ticket. There was a line at the deli counter and at the cash register and at the lotto machine, and the lady that I shared my shift with was nowhere to be seen. Usually one of her kids would call, or she was on the phone calling them to check up on them. She usually spent our shifts together telling me how I should never get married and how worthless men are. Lucky for me I only worked two shifts a month with her.

"Lady, I want some of that ham that's on sale here," a burly man called hurriedly. "Lady, my lotto tickets?" "Honey, can y'all get me a half pint Seagram's?" I was ready to scream.

Just then, the boss walked in. "Ron, Take the deli, will ya?" I said. "Jean's in the cooler, and I don't know what the hell's keeping her."

Ron, all sweetness and light begins his pitch, "Now my good man, what can I get you?" I finally got the lotto tickets printed and to the cash register. Two high school kids tried to buy beer again. I always card--I don't know what they think they're doin'--I'm not going to lose my only source of income because I sell to a minor and end up in jail.

Finally everything was calm. Ron took a total cash received reading on the register to make sure I was doing my job and getting sales up

there. "Seven-hundred--Kris, when'd you start on this drawer?" he asked me. I always work three to seven, and he should know that--he writes the schedule. So I told him at three. "Not bad, not bad a-t'all."

I pulled an envelope containing a hundred bucks from under my bra strap, "You forgot to unlock the drop-safe again, so I have this on me, and the rest is in the cooler under the chickens in a plastic bag."

Ron laughed, "You girls are quite the pack rats. I'll go get it and drop it for ya. Sorry."

The next few customers started coming in for their daily papers. I give 'em a little advice, if they ask. Being a cashier is like being a bartender in some ways, especially my shift. You get the people off the train between five and seven. I can always tell what kind of a mood they're in by what they buy. Take this one Black guy--he comes in every night, buys a Daily Game ticket, a pack of Winston's and a pack of Virginia Slims 120's. His name's Carl, and he works downtown at the Merc. I figured out who his wife was last week--they play the same lotto numbers and she buys his cigarettes as well as her Virginia Slims. I've matched more couples up that way since I started working here. Today, he was smiling, and told me he was gonna be a daddy. Said nothing could burst his bubble today.

There's never much to do around here except read and watch the kids that come in. We'd

get robbed blind if someone didn't watch those kids. Some of 'em get real ticked if you follow them around the store. I always do, 'cause I don't know who's gonna take what and how much. I caught a kid with a box of Captain Crunch under his coat once—he told me that he didn't get any breakfast, and he didn't have any money. I got his name off his school books and called his mom. She came up to get him and apologized for his behavior. I smelled liquor on her breath, and I wondered if it had been such a great idea to catch the kid in the first place. "As long as Scotty never does this again, I won't tell the boss." Scotty promised, and the mother was calm throughout the whole thing. I watched them go out the door, and through a crack in the window-ads, I saw her slam the kid open-handed across the mouth, yelling obscenities at him. They got into the car and drove away, she still screaming, the kid curled up tighter than a potato bug.

I looked back to the cooler, and I saw someone moving around in there. The door swung open and I just figured it was Ron hauling

empty beer crates out back, 'cause the back door was wide open.

I don't know how long it was before the cops got there.

I'd gone back to see what was taking so long, and there was Ronny, laying on the floor with a frozen chicken about a foot from his head. Jean wasn't there.

Turns out that Jean and her convict-hoodlum hubby made a habit of going around and putting one over on folks. The drop safe wasn't really locked when I came on my shift. Jean locked it after she cleared it out, and knowing that I would make a bundle on my shift, she got greedy and stayed around.

The cops got them about thirty miles down in Will County with a flat tire. Those two idiots—you'd think that if they were gonna rob a place they'd at least steal a reliable car.

I still work at the store, cleaning windows, running the register, and giving folks advice. There is one thing though: we don't sell chickens anymore. □

:Social Groupings

11240

Larry A. Baker

1,11,112,1124,11240

114,120,240

12,14,20

8

9

Some belong.

Some do not.

Peachy Ke(e)n

Julie Van Zee

N
I
C
E...

Michigan bred.

Icy blond.

Circular, with a single seam.

Healthy. Ripe.

Imagine--sweet, soft,

Golden.

All in one

Neatly wrapped fruit.

Always in

Season--a

Sensual cool smooth.

MAYBE I DON'T WANT TO BE A WRITER

David Harding

Why write? Why Write? Why put oneself through needless agony, pain, and frustration that occurs when: I know what idea I want to express but just cannot find the right word? Or when my ideas are all down but I can't figure out how to pull them together at the end? Or even when I have a concise assignment, a clearcut question to answer, and I reach into my brain, delving for the sketchiest possible idea, but come up emptyhanded? Why write? This is indeed a good question.

If I didn't write, I could sleep. I could fall on my bed exhausted, curl up under the covers, and dream. I could dream that, in the middle of a wet, dark night, I am in a strange forest fleeing for my life from murderers and thieves. I frantically reach the end of the forest where a gulch drops off hundreds of feet. But since I am dreaming, I am able to leap thirty feet to the other side and escape. Or I could dream that I am diving deep in the ocean depths for sunken treasure. I swim lower and lower only to realize, near the bottom, that I don't have an air tank. I am dreaming, though, and don't need one. Amid slowly circling, snarling sharks at the bottom of the ocean is the treasure. I retrieve it. As I lay dreaming, though, I stand the chance of missing the roaring fire trucks as they scream down my street. If there happened to be a fire, that is.

If I didn't write, I could eat. I could eat

a fresh garden salad chock full of bright red tomatoes that burst open when I cut them, squirting juice and seeds. Or I could eat steaming chocolate chip cookies, just out of the oven, that I have to peel off the cookie sheet. When I touch a chip on top, the firmer skin around it gives way and the chocolate pours out all over my fingers. But then again I might eat grapes from Chile, and die. Or perhaps accidentally eat bananas and a turkey sandwich together, mixing protein with fruit. This would give me gas. Or I might cut and eat a slice of old cheese that after I've already eaten it I notice has mold on it. I would get grossed out and get sick. Or even do both, eat bananas and a turkey sandwich with cheese on it, get sick AND get gas. The chance of such an accident actually happening is not as slim as one might think.

If I didn't write, I could go for a walk. I could venture outside into the cool breeze and walk along a narrow, tree-lined path by the river. The leaves would rustle in the breeze and the sky would be bright blue with pure white, vast cotton ball clouds scattered throughout. But what if the clouds cumulated. The sky might turn dark and the wind could start to howl. It might start to rain. My clothes would be soaked, and I might catch cold. And if I were away from home I might miss an important phone call. What if the caller didn't leave a message? And what if she never called back again?

If I didn't write, I could read a book. I

could experience exotic, faraway places. I could be the first man on Mars, discovering the ruins of a vast civilization that had inhabited the planet. I could yield myself to wild adventures, or passion. I could be an Indian in the wild West, galloping bareback on my horse, hunting and brushing my legs up against massive wild buffalo galloping beside me. Or I might be involved in a secret love affair. We could meet only in the dead of night, outside the city. And even then we would risk our

lives only whispering to each other. On the other hand, if the book is not quite as captivating as I would like, I might fall asleep. If I fell asleep I might miss the fire trucks as they scream down my street right past my house--if there happened to be a fire on my street.

Besides, why not live the wild, adventurous tales instead of just reading about them. If I experience life richly enough, maybe I can write my own book. ▀

Mapping

Sharon Johnson

Driving alone
one notices
intersections,
fences,
mile markers--
details of terrain.

What Matters

Jessica Jenkins

how?
how does it work as it does?
even now
as I fold your letter
I wonder.
wonder
what it is,
the force that pulls people
together,
keeping them there
although there are
vast miles
between.
between physical beings,
but not hearts
not feelings
those are knit,
close
together.
somehow
the roughness

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Sherri Beeler

It was a day to be out flirting with the wind--the wind that brought the first breath of warmth since winter, promising all the revelry of the coming spring. I sat in the barn milking my goats, squirting an occasional stream into the waiting mouth of my black cat, whose fur shone almost roan in the river of sunshine that splashed through the barn doors. My does--seven of them--were unusually sassy that morning, spilling the milk pail more than once, jumping on my back as I bent to fill their water buckets, frisking around as if devilish elves had stirred up their blood. The babies were playing their favorite game--"Spider-man"--running from one end of the pen to the other as fast as they could, springing upon the wall and bouncing off with all four feet, landing with a grunt, then feverishly scrabbling off to the opposite wall for a repeat performance. Who could refuse their begging to be outdoors after being cooped inside all winter?

I pushed open the heavy metal sliding door of the pen and ran up towards the pasture, calling them. "Goatie-goatie-goaties! Come on, girls! Glori! Come on!" Glori was my herd boss; once she came, the others would follow. It took little coaxing to get them outside. In fact, they burst through the door in a jubilant rush of hooves and wagging tails, snuffing and snorting as they came, bouncing after me with legs stiff like pogo sticks.

They skittered and danced their way to the upper pasture in front of our house. I locked the gate and laughed as I watched the babies stare dumbfoundedly at their new surroundings. They tentatively investigated the grass, poking the short blades up their noses until they sneezed tiny cat-like sneezes; they ate dirt-clods, jumped on their mothers, and tried to master the steps to the sideways scamper. I envied their exultant boisterousness. They didn't have the awful privilege of sitting in a classroom for six hours, like I did.

School was much too slow that day. The weather was just perfect for daydreaming. I imagined myself outside with my goats--climbing trees, wallowing in the sunshine, smelling the green of spring. I indulged myself in past memories of Glori and me. I remembered the day we brought her home--my very first goat. How gruff and stern and aloof she had been! As herd boss, she fiercely and proudly kept all my other goats in line. But beneath the exterior show of toughness she was patient and gentle, standing stone-still for forty-five minutes the first time I learned to milk her. I remembered preparing her for show--how she hated to be body-clipped! She squirmed and fought me, and when I scolded her, she vehemently sneezed green goat snot all over my face--and laughed gleefully at me with her eyes. I remembered the hot summer days during our county fair and the confusion in the show ring: goats baaing urgently for their kids, restlessly

pawing sawdust on the judge's pantlegs, fussing and fidgeting as she ran her discerning hands lightly over their bodies, checking for spring of rib and dairy character. The hoping, and the waiting, and the wondering--and then the joy, when the judge motioned us to the head of the class to receive grand champion.

Finally the clock dragged its hands around to three-thirty, and an hour and a half bus ride was all that stood between me and freedom. When Mom got off work, she picked me up at the bus stop and we drove home. I scooped up my books and stepped outside almost before Mom had stopped the car. I called my goats, waiting for their lusty chorus of baas in response, but all that answered was silence.

And then my eyes hit the pasture gate. There it stood, swung wide open, with an empty green field gaping behind. My goats--where were my goats? I tried not to panic, but my mind could not stop the rising fear. I called them again--urgently--and Princess answered with her low, plaintive bawl, joined belatedly by Dolly's higher pitched voice. They were in the barn.

I ran down the path and through the door, and stepped into a horrifying scene. My does' stomachs were swollen, engorged, protruding from their rib cages and rising abnormally above their backbones. They milled about aimlessly, nibbling at bits of hay here and there, utter-

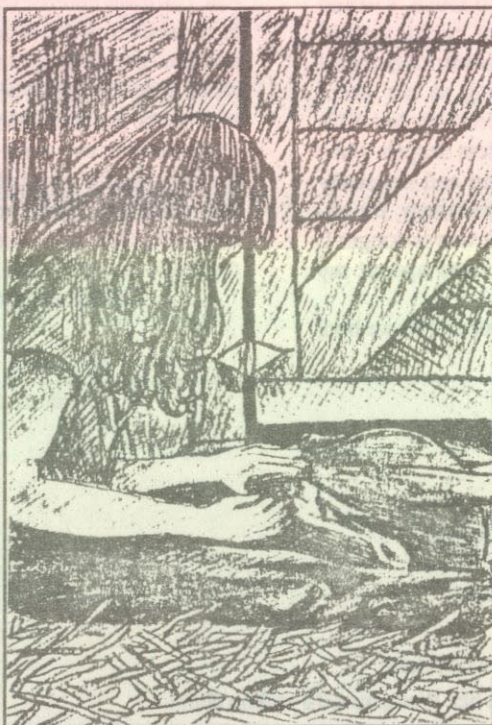
ing a casual greeting, while some of the babies slept in disorderly piles around the barn. The tackroom door stood open, and the overturned, empty trash can that had previously held eighty pounds of grain lay telltale on the floor.

Like most ruminant animals, goats have sensitive digestive systems. An overdose of grain can be fatal. My does were unable to process the grain quickly enough; it had settled in their stomachs too long, fermenting and producing poisons that spread throughout their bloodstream, attacking the vital organs.

We penned my goats, separating the mothers from the babies (who were too little to know that grain was anything good to eat), and began the agonizing process of forcing Maalox and oil through clenched teeth, down unyielding throats; of gently pummeling their swollen sides, kneading them with our fists to get

them to burp up the gaseous air in their bloated stomachs. Baking soda paste came next, in a futile attempt to neutralize the toxins brewing in their stomachs. But we were too late.

I got no sleep that night--a night of agony, of pain, of frustration and helplessness, of repressed tears. Princess died first, despite Dad's attempts at CPR and Mom's desperate ministrations of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Bobbie



Sue was next. Then Katie, Milky, Dolly . . . By morning, only Patience, and Glori remained.

I held Glori as she struggled for her life, gasping and gurgling for each breath as fluid slowly filled her lungs and drowned her. I fought with her, fought for her, begged with God as foam frothed from her mouth and her eyes pleaded dully with me. I remembered how, when the fair week rush had gotten to be too much, I would climb into Glori's pen as she slept, curling up next to her, laying my head on her powerful barreled ribs, and falling asleep listening to her deep, sturdy breathing. Now, as she drew her last difficult breath, I sat there in helpless despair while her body became suddenly limp and unusually heavy in my arms. I waited, agonizingly, for another breath—but none came. It was no longer I, but she who "slept" with her head against my chest. I had lost her.

I wept--wept for the memories we had,

wept for the memories we would no longer create.

Numb, exhausted, I left the pen, slowly shutting the gate behind me. Across the aisle the babies stirred uneasily, and Rowena poked out her curly head with long lashes like Katie's had been, uttering a pitiful, half-choked baa. I listlessly entered their pen, and immediately nine babies crowded around my knees. I sat down, and five of them fought for my lap, pushing each other impatiently out of the way with tiny heads and hoofs, jostling for the best position. They finally settled, two in my lap, a third draped over my feet, with the rest curled around me as close as they could get. Their breathing was quick, quiet, rhythmic; their sides rose and fell with soothing regularity under my hands.

I held them, and we slept. ▢

Inheritance

Larry A. Baker

One got his worn violin.
Another got her Wedgewood-Pavilion china.
Ethel got the clock.

I settled for memories
and a toaster.

Caution Lights

Valerie Van Horssen

Highlighted verses,
like caution lights,
on the open pages of my Bible.
My desk strewn with notes, lists--signs.

Sheets and blankets yanked forward
in one sudden motion.

Clothes scattered in my path.

A rumble, sputter,
I'm running on empty,
yet . . .
I grab my jacket and
speed out the door.

FLESH AND BONE

Holly Donaghy

Into my own crowded world falls a dream.

The earth is a marble, splashed with cat's eye, and glittering in the sunlight. Dreams are crystal as the marble, yet shatter at the touch of reality.

I watched it wither and die. The radio was still playing top 40, and the sun was still shining, but a life was over. My link to the world away from me, the telephone, had severed my knowledge of life, and my sense of dreams were shattered. At the end of that phone call, my dream, my sense of the flowering spirit of Jeni Wentworth had crumbled.

Jeni must be in some room at Cook County now, a coroner cutting into what little flesh was on her body to begin with. Suddenly, a marble shattered within my brain—I screamed a sense-shivering scream as slivers of glass cut into my memory.

It is Easter Sunday, and no one is here, and there is no hope of the loss of life returning this day. It is not a resurrection day. This day does not hold within in it the love of a god who kills innocence.

In a game of marbles, if you hit a marble with a big shooter marble, it **CRACKS** into another marble and sends it flying out of the string circle that is its boundary. The marble lives to

survive another game. It is when someone steps on the marble, and in its weakness, that it shatters into crystalline bits that glitter in the light and crunch beneath the toes of the world.

The phone is in its cradle, and anyone who didn't hear it ring didn't know of the deadly morosity such a ring held. She didn't wake up, and she didn't die in pain, she just died. No more Jeni to flame the hearts of mankind.

Her eyes were bluer than the sky at noon. Her body—hips naught but knobby knots of bone and sinew supporting the rest of the shell that sustained her life.

I saw her three weeks ago, in the entryway of our house, smiling through tears over a lost love. Hugging her through her coat, I felt the raw ache of bone rubbing against bone and the rampant fire of fever torching whatever life she had left.

She wasn't always thin. She was never fat, but she wasn't always so very thin. She never wore her glasses, so she squinted. When you looked at her, she would purse her lips into a pout and say, "What?" I glanced at her out of the corner of my eye, wondering how she could be cold with all of those clothes on, but she shivered just the same.

I was amazed at Jeni's transformation on stage. Despite her thinness, her stark barren bones concealed only by a stretched skin, the characters of Juliet, Romaine Vole, and others

came alive when she herself appeared to be dead or dying.

I saw her later, after the funeral, preserved in news clippings and pictures that were datable. The eyes that stared back into mine were empty, lifeless. The blueness was solid, glasslike.

Someone stepped on the blueness, and

crushed the marble into oblivion. The dream was shattered like a marble beneath a giant heel that deems what should live or die. The fragments cry and plead to others to keep dreaming. The slivers of life, the crumbs of the past, are the hope for tomorrow. □

Rape

Grace Ann De Boer

An autumn oak tree braced naked

Against chilling rain drops.

Each drip fell,

Shivered on lower leaf,

And tore it.

The scabbed branches lay exposed and withering.

Tiny cadmium legs scriddle across

The naked bough

Sucking still more life from the acorn pores.

The oak endures the draining.

Layers of scar tissue insulate a bitter,

Yet obstinate circulation.

Though the leaches drink,

They receive not a drop.

WHEN WE FINALLY REACH PARADISE MAY I GO HOME?

Mark VanderMeulen

It was one of those first days of spring, when the snow seems finally to be melting away and the joggers begin coming out in force. I don't know exactly what drives them—what it is about spring that makes them uneasy until the open door beckons and they jump in response, celebrating their summons with bright colored sweatsuits. Perhaps it is the same call that I hear in spring, more often in the past when I had more time to get outside and lie on the cool grass, feel the new warmth of the sun, and examine up close the new green blades of grass pushing their way up through last year's brown jungle.

It was that sort of feeling, anxious and pent-up, that I mouldered in as I drove home. I think that if I had a chance, if twelve problems of recombinant DNA and thirty cantos of Dante's *Paradiso* hadn't pressed so heavily on my mind, I would have found a nice spread of grass to lie on and contemplate clouds, the complexities of life, and tulip sprouts. But instead I was driving the twelve blocks from campus to my home with a stuffed backpack on the seat next to me and a curious desire to do anything except homework.

Thus, as I approached my driveway the up-tempo beat of a song on the radio caught my fancy, the sun glared brightly off a parked car, and I kept driving.

A little farther down the road I saw my

sister walking in a field near a small creek that runs near our house. A sixth grader, Lynae had a habit of greeting me by running to me yelling "Markie, Markie," throwing her arms around my waist, and clinging there for a while like a giggly blonde parasite. A heavier load of classes had kept me from coming home as often as in previous semesters, so she missed her big brother, and was always glad to see me when I got back. So I stopped, got out of the car, and called to her.

Turning around, she saw me. It seemed to take her a few minutes to figure out who I was, and then she took a few running steps towards me. Then she stopped. She looked behind her to where the line of trees marked the flow of the creek, then kept coming towards me, walking rather than running. She stopped again and called something that was lost in the wind.

"What?" I called back and took a few steps closer to where the grassy ditch met the muddy line of the field. She called again, but still I couldn't hear, and waved her closer.

She started walking again, almost breaking into a run occasionally, but looking down or back at the creek rather than at me. I almost started running to her; I looked down and saw that the field was covered with enough alfalfa to make crossing possible, but since I was wearing a good pair of shoes, I decided not to chance it.

"Hi, Markie," she said when she got

nearer. She stood at the edge of the field and squinted into the sun to look at me.

"Hi, Lynae."

"You coming home now?"

"Yeah. It's a beautiful day, and I thought I'd get away from school for a while."

"Yeah," she agreed, with the voice of one who has great sympathy for someone who actually LIVES at school. The wind blew a strand of blond hair into her face, and with a toss of her head she flicked it away. "You home for a while or just a little bit?"

"I'm home for the weekend," I told her. "Whatcha doin'?"

"Looking at the creek," she told me simply. "See that bunch of trees over there?" she asked, pointing to a cluster of tall, spindly young trees. "I'm pretending that a witch lives there and I'm going to find her."

"Oh." I glanced at the grove and tried to imagine a wisp of green smoke curling up from them. Two birds flew through the trees scolding loudly, and the clouds blew slowly across the sky, but I could see no smoke. "You coming home?" I asked.

"No," she said. "I want to go look at the stream. I'll come home later. Maybe we can play a game. Tell Mom I'll be back in time for supper."

"Ok. I'll see you later then."

"Yeah," she said, turning around to walk back towards her witch's grove. I turned around as well and walked back to the car, where my backpack full of books sat on the seat next to me, waiting.

It was still spring as I drove the rest of the way around the block and into the driveway, but it wasn't about blades of grass pushing up through a bed of mulch that I was thinking. I was thinking that my sister was growing up. We both were, but growing in different directions. To her, paradise meant no school and a forest of witches; to me it meant nothing more than two or three hours of reading Dante's ascent into heaven in rhyming triplets and discerning aspects of high medieval cosmology. I used to have more fun. I used to enjoy playing adventures with witches and forests, but I've changed--I've been educated. ▣



Fingerworld

Grace Ann De Boer

I fingered a cool metal edge--
Solid gray density touched my eyes,
Anchored my mind.

Then a dreamed spectrum wafted.
My fingers raked, but I splashed through.

No metal pressed.
Just tickling pin-pricks in a coma.
In this world, gray matter touches outer eye
And its shadow delves behind eye, to lodge
In the liver.

I jerked to awaken.
Holograms persisted to
Wave tingles inside fingertips,
While my hard gray edge slits the palm.

In bloody numbness, my fingerworld drags.
Should I swim in holograms or drown in my
anchor?

I Slid Once

Grace Ann De Boer

I slid below self--
Once.
Into beckoning holograms
That splayed light.
I swam.

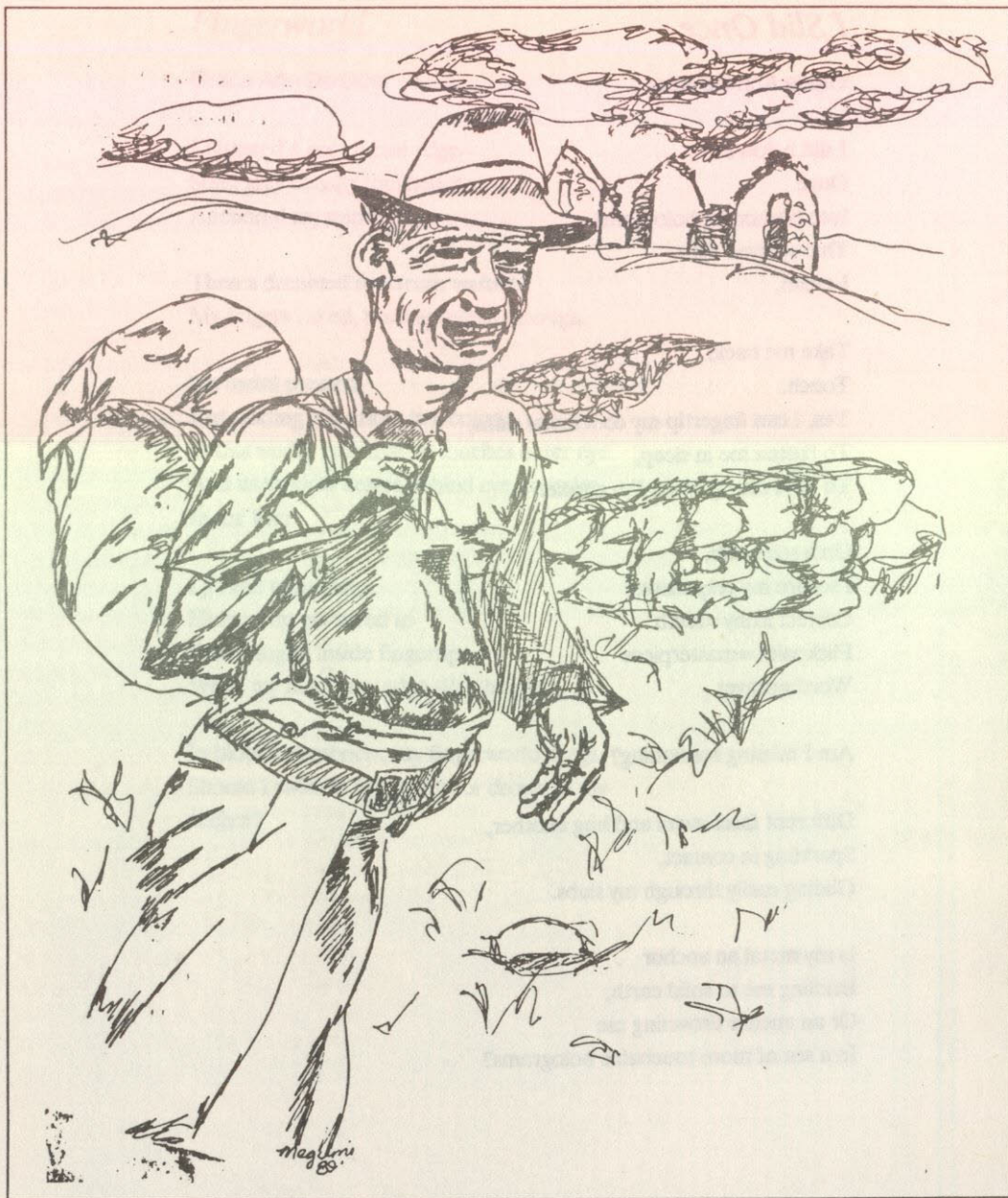
Take me back!
Touch.
Yes, I can fingertip my cool metal slabs,
To flatten me in sleep,
To hold me up when I'm awake.

On a solid slab,
I secure my responses:
Correct irony=teeth
Flickpaint=masterpiece
Word=prayer

Am I missing something?

Different faces swim and hug another,
Sparkling in contact,
Gliding easily through my slabs.

Is my metal an anchor
Bridling me to solid earth,
Or an anchor drowning me
In a sea of more touchable holograms?



Drawing by Grace De Boer

Eire

Grace Ann De Boer

On scattered rough-hewn walls,
A pale gypsy
Trips a brogue-tongued tune
To echo from stone
Through the up-faced violets
To stone.
Flushed with resonant glory,
All breathe the Sun.

The gypsy catches up his stony song
And soaks bonny violets
Within his offering fist.
The three enter into megalith,
Where Kyrie resounds between man-cut walls,
Halts Sun-breathed hymn
In stony resolution.
A marbled rosary withers the gypsy
To a wine-stained blush,
Like his wilting violets.

The Life of Music

Sherri Beeler

Conductor's hands
Command attention,
Motionless, poised,
Like bird about prey,
Swooping down
And soaring up,
Pulling music with him,
Twining melody and harmony in air.

Baton held surely
With surgeon's skill;
Carving fluid lines,
Slicing circles,
Stabbing, piercing,
Sweeping widely through the air.

Hands glide, soaring high
On wings of music borne--
Festal strains surging, swelling,
Coursing through fingertips.
Streaming, pouring,
Music bursts in air,
Cavorting, carousing,
Whirling around,
Enveloping in frenzy.

Arms wade through--
They do not falter;
Supple wrists carry on.
Music ebbs,
Hangs hushed, exhausted,
Fluted, rippling song.

Arms reach out,
Embrace music,
Draw it close;
It gathers gently into palms,
Holds, hushed,
And finally stills.

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